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ABSTRACT

In 1986 the Technology and Social Change Program and the College of Business at Iowa State University joined forces to develop a new graduate course that focused on the role of the multinational corporation in technology transfer to the lesser developed countries. The course was team taught by faculty from different disciplines and colleges, and was directed toward graduate majors in international development and international business. Background information about the university and the development of the course is presented along with a description of the couse itself and an outline of the various benefits the course has to offer the university, individual disciplines, the participating faculty members, and the business graduate students. Experiences of one member of the permanent faculty team teaching the course show how foreign-language-for-business instructors can contribute to and benefit from such a course. (DB)

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INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM:

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM: TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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INTRODUCTION

It is the object of this paper to show how a program in technology and social change can contribute to the internationalization of the business curriculum, and how it can serve as a catalyst to spur further internationalization through enhanced faculty development and curriculum innovation. To this end in 1986 the Technology and Social Change Program and the College of Business at Iowa State University joined forces to develop a new graduate course offering which focused on the role of the multinational corporation in technology transfer to the lesser developed and developing countries of the Third World. This course is a spinoff from another course focusing on technology transfer and social change in the context of rural development in the Third World. Both these courses are team taught by faculty from different disciplines and colleges; engineering, agriculture, architecture, nutrition, economics, sociology, anthropology, business, English, foreign languages, philosophy, forestry, genetics and biochemistry faculty are regular participants. In each of the courses I've described, the team includes a visiting Third World faculty member with expertise in an area of development. The targeted audience for the "MNC" course are the graduate majors in

international development and international business. The most important question we need to ask ourselves is what need does this course fill that is not already taken care of in traditional how-to-do-business-abroad courses such as international finance or marketing? Two compelling reasons stand out, it is true. First, in our rush to enter into the new European market of 1992, as well as Eastern Europe we've lost sight of the tremendous potential markets in Latin America and Asia, and put Africa out of mid completely. Second, when we enter into competition in Third World markets, we clash head-on with an alien value system and find that cultural misunderstandings impede our progress. The best way to understand these different socio-cultural systems and how they affect business relations is to adopt the other guy's point of view and to attempt to understand the needs of the host country. But these are but two of a number of needs filled by such a course. I would like to explain what this course has to offer the university, individual disciplines and the participating faculty member as well as the business graduate student. I would also like to draw on my own experience as one of the permanent faculty team teaching this course to show how foreign-language-for-business instructors can contribute to and benefit from such a course. To this end I would like to present background information about the university and the development of the course, and describe the course itself.

BACKGROUND

Iowa State University of Science and Technology is the oldest land-grant

institution in the nation. A large part of its effort since 1858 has been teaching, research and extension programs related to agricultural and socioeconomic development for the state, the nation and the world. In its effort to adapt the land-grant philosophy to the changing needs of our times ISU has broadened its mission to encompass ethical, cultural, political and environmental factors affecting the living conditions of the world's people. Business is a recent (1983) addition to the other eight colleges: Agriculture, Design, Education, Engineering, Family and Consumer Sciences, Sciences and Humanities, Veterinary Medicine, and the Graduate college. Agricultural business and ag economics are and have been a part of the College of Agriculture. ISU has many programs which define it as an international leader in rural development. Preeminent among these are:

1. The World Food Institute

Established in 1972, it seeks to generate solutions to food and nutrition problems and to build competencies for the implementation of solutions to theses problems, as well as to collect, analyze and disseminate information relating to these problems world-wide. Current faculty projects related to world food are being carried out in the Sudan, Ghana, Colombia, Korea, Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, the Phillipines, Thailand, India, Pakistan and Chile. Distinguished scholars and development professionals from these and other countries lecture and do research at ISU.

2. Development Advisory Team Training

Nearly six hundred scientists, scholars, and development experts from Iowa State University--representing 57 disciplines, speaking 30 different languages, and having consulting, teaching, and research experience in more than 60 non-European countries--have participated in 11 intensive Development Advisory Team (DAT) Training sessions at Iowa State University from March 1981-January 1990; given under the auspices of the Technology and Social Change Program.

The primary objective of the DAT program is to train highly integrated, multidisciplinary international development programs support teams. The participants are given a full range of management, development planning, project implementation, evaluation, and team performance sills and are trained to work in Development Advisory Teams which provide rapid response, high compatibility, and efficient execution of multidisciplinary international development program needs. For future short- and long-range international assignments, teams can be assembled from individuals who have participated in DAT training programs.

3. Center for Indigenous Knowledge for Agriculture and Rural Development (CIKARD)

The Center for Indigenous Knowledge for Agriculture and Rural Development focuses its activities on preserving and using the local knowledge

of farmers and other rural people around the globe. CIKARD was established at Iowa State University in October of 1987 as part of ISU's Technology and Social Change Program. Its goal is to collect indigenous knowledge and make it available to development professionals and scientists. The Center has four functions: (1) acting as a clearing house for accessing, storing and disseminating indigenous knowledge; (2) developing methodologies for recording this knowledge; (3) conducting training courses and designing materials on indigenous knowledge for extension workers and other host-country nationals; and (4) facilitating cross-disciplinary research on indigenous knowledge.

4. USAID-Sponsored Programs

Under a variety of grants and programs, ISU faculty have conducted intensive training programs in Central America, Africa and Southeast Asia in a number of fields including rural development, education, health care and farming practices. In addition, several groups of educators from Central American countries visit ISU for semester intensive training courses.

The above list is a short list meant to typify the many international research projects which are an on-going priority at ISU. The bottom line is the more than 2,000 international students and faculty who are present in any given year. This group is our major resource in implementing the sort of course we wished to design. The course, in addition to its already stated objectives, has served as a bridge between the students and faculty in agribusiness and the new College of

Business. Traditionally the agenda of each of these programs has been widely different. It is hoped that by exposing both faculty and students in the business college to broader international concerns this course will become a catalyst for further internationalization of the business curriculum. As we will see, the visiting Third World faculty add to the pool of "internationalists," thus expanding the number of international "business" courses available to graduate students. In following sections of this paper I will show how the course design strives to maximize communication and foster problem-solving skills in a cross-cultural setting.

TSC 541: TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE THIRD WORLD; THE ROLE OF THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION

I. Who and how? A typical section consists of 25 to 30 students, half of whom are international students (almost exclusively from the Third World). The countries represented range from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. A significant percentage already hold one graduate degree and are professionals in such fields as development economics, journalism and business. Happily, thus far at least, one of these students has been an American executive for a multinational corporation. There is a great deal of expertise to be shared by students as well as faculty.

To maximize the possibilities for discussion class sessions are structured in the

following manner during the first nine or ten three-hour classes:

1. First hour: presentation of case studies representing conflicting viewpoints centering on a particular issue. This is done by two or three students. The group includes both American and international students. Care is taken to assign each student an article from the readings which is from a source outside the student's own field. These readings are taken from a course booklet put together each semester from recent articles in journals from varied disciplines.

2. Second/Third hours: lecture and discussion or films.

The last portion of the semester is dedicated to oral presentations by students based on 25-page term papers, followed by class discussion. The student presenting is required to furnish careful handouts as well as visuals. Discussion is animated and often is carried off-campus to one of the local student hangouts. The group "bonds" quickly and lasting relationships are formed. This is true for the faculty teams as well.

II. What? Course objectives, topics.

A. Course objectives:

1. to develop an awareness of the interplay among technology, social organization, and the environment;

2. to create an appreciation of the needs and aspirations of developing countries and of the contribution that technology can make in assisting those

countries;

3. to encourage a sensitivity to the range of issues and constraints that should be considered in efforts to transfer technology across differing cultures; and

4. to foster a recognition that solutions to the problems of developing countries cannot be confined to technical considerations alone but require attention to social relations and culture as well.

B. Lecture and discussion topics for the initial eight weeks:[1]

Week one. Introduction; overview of the "Third World."

Week two. Technology, Development, and Social Change; definitions and perspectives; development strategies; historical context. Readings: Frame, Chapter 1; Jenkins, Chapter 1; Dickenson, Chapters 1-3.

Week three. Demand for Technology: needs of developing nations; indicators of development; problems of population growth, urbanization, health care, etc. Readings: Frame, Chapter 10; Jenkins, Chapter 2; Dickenson, Chapters 4-5.

Week four. Supply of Technology: goals and needs of MNCs; capital-intensive and labor-intensive techniques; high tech vs. appropriate technology. Readings: Frame, Chapters 5-6; Jenkins, Chapters 3-4; Dickenson, Chapter 6-7.

Week five. Sociocultural Context of Technology Transfer: traditional customs and patterns; cultural constraints and opportunities; social

organization; gender roles. Readings: Frame, Chapters 2-3; Jenkins, Chapter 5; Dickenson, Chapter 8.

Week six. Sociocultural context (cont'd); institutional aids and barriers; role of government, unions, schools, telecommunications, etc. Readings: Frame, Chapter 4; Jenkins, Chapter 6; Dickenson, Chapter 9.

Week seven. Donor and Host Country Relations: instruments of technology transfer; licensing, joint ventures, etc; ownership and accessibility of technology; patents, trade secrets; management styles. Readings: Frame, Chapter 7; Jenkins, Chapter 7; Dickenson, Chapter 10. Film: Going International.

Week eight. Geopolitical context: transfer agreements; choosing technology; international debt; national policies of donor and host countries. Readings: Dickenson, Chapter 11; Film: Mexico and the Debt Crisis.

Week nine. Exam.

Weeks ten to sixteen. Oral reports, films, speakers.

THE COURSE AS CATALYST: FRINGE BENEFITS

The advantages of a cross-disciplinary approach are obvious. However, faculty members not acquainted with the program or the course often question the appropriateness of participation by humanities faculty. Philosophers are these to present the ethical implications of the decision-making process. And foreign language instructors? All too often, cross-cultural training is seen as the realm

of sociologists and cultural anthropologists. Linguists and literary scholars are viewed as area specialists. The author of this paper teaches Latin American literature and civilization as well as Spanish for business, and previously worked internationally in marketing, advertising and strategic planning for 18 years prior to entering academia. Participation in this course has acquainted me with a wide-range of cross-cultural training materials from the social sciences and human resources development studies. This adds to my skills as a language for business teacher. It also keeps me up to date on corporate needs in international training, an area in which I do research, so that I may realistically prepare my international business students for a successful career.

The course is kinetic, dynamic. It generates enthusiasm among students and faculty alike. Course evaluations often state, "this course changed my life (or my career choice, my thinking, etc.)." Business faculty members who have participated or audited (as some do), return to their departments with a zeal for internationalizing the curriculum. New exchanges and alliances result from the participation of the visiting international professors. For example, plans are underway to take a section of the course to Mexico to an institution with which we already have some exchanges.

CONCLUSION

A technology and social change course offering focused on international business in addition to forming a basic component of development studies

contributes to the internationalization of the business curriculum and the university in a number of ways by:

1. Offering the student a different perspective on doing business in other cultures, and creating an awareness of the many cultural constraints on problem solving.

2. Integrating seemingly disparate elements of the university community in a common undertaking, thus enriching the individual disciplines.

3. Strengthening each participating discipline with the injection of new teaching methodologies and materials.

4. Serving as an instrument of faculty development. The enhanced international expertise of these faculty members "spills over" to other course offerings, and leads to greater faculty involvement in overseas programs.

5. Promoting more contact between American and Third World students and laying the groundwork for future personal and business relationships.

And what are the additional advantages for foreign language departments participating in these courses? They include:

1. A chance to enhance the departments visibility and reputation in the university community, and a reminder to that community that cross-cultural training is part of our discipline.

2. Exposure to new methods and materials for enriching a) business-language courses, and b) the treatment of culture in the basic language and civilization

sequences.

3. The ongoing exposure of business-language instructors to new approaches and issues in business and other disciplines, thus making them more valuable adjuncts to overseas programs and extension courses for the business community.

NOTES

[1]Textbooks are:

J. Davidson Frame. International Business and Global Technology. Lexington Books, 1983.

J.P. Dickenson, et al. A Geography of the Third World. Methuen, 1983.

Rhys Jenkins. Transnational Corporations and Uneven Development. Methuen, 1987.

TSC 541. Course Pack (25 journal articles updated each semester).